LMP S23 08/22/02

[Two different informants, mother and daughter; mother's voice is often muffled and unintelligible. Their comments are separated by paragraphs but not identified. Sorry about Spanish words I could not understand. Comments in italics are from CH or MOJ. –MM, transcriber]

Side A

…I would ask my mother, and usually they didn't give you very much, because especially if you're young, they'll outgrow it, or it's not part of the illnesses except for something like pneumonia…something very serious. I would just do the things my mother asked me to.

So you talked to her before taking the baby to the doctor?

I would say, this is wrong with him, I would ask, and I would try, but you know I would still take him to the doctor because I felt that I had to. It wasn't till later, you know, I started to see, some things, I don't have to take him to the doctor. And that's one of the things I try to tell my son, because if they don't get a shot, they're not getting treated. That's kind of the thing here. I said, you know, you don't have to go to the doctor for that! There's things that it's not serious, it's—because you get it early and it's not something you have to go pay a doctor for. And if you get a shot, that's worse, because the antibiotics is just breaking down your immune system, and Elena really drives that home to all of us.

I remember when we were little, we lived up on a hill just on the other side of Belvedere, and my mother had in our back yard a whole row of [?] plants, and my grandmother hired this man and he would come and cut the center core out of it, and hollowed it out, and the next morning, he would come once a week, and he corked it with one of the leaves, and he would uncork it and inside this hollowed-out space would be filled with the juice from the [my gay?] and he would spoon it out into these glass milk bottles, and he would give some to my mom, give some to my grandmother, and he got to keep some, that was kind of his pay. But every morning we would drink the juice from that my gay plant. So you know, I thought, it had this kind of carbonated taste cause it was fermented—it would ferment in the plant, but it was good, it was a little sweet, and I looked forward to it. They would call it [alamiel?] and we would drink it every day. And we were talking about it the other night, my brother was saying I remember that, and my sister Denise didn't like it, so she wouldn't really drink it, but we all drank it, and we would say, she's little because she doesn't drink all of the alamiel! Cause she was the littlest one, and we all were big.

When I was a young girl, a teenager, my mother always had to have [my gay semopares?] that was her property for this [stand of my gay?] they were there, I guess it was California's, very wild there, there was pepper tree, there was [?], but they were old old stands, they were huge. And the my gays, in the yard there. When she first was giving me that, I didn't like it, because I guess it had set in that scooped out core, and it was kind of murky looking, and I didn't like it. But I think I told you, a while back, I was skinny and I

was born during the Depression, and so my mother always put me with tonic—anything that would make me grow nice and strong. She'd make that [chia rivero?] it's a tonic but she would prepare it like a alla fresca, it was sweetened and it was delicious. I wish I could remember how she made it. But some of the [?] I drink are actually too sweet. Once in a while you'll get some that are prepared so that it's the natural taste, but people tend to oversweeten them. But they're good, they're natural drinks. So I kind of grew up with that idea that it was going to be relative but it was good for you, it just filled you up. And so it was my mother's idea to give him the [?] because I didn't think of doing that myself. But then this man started coming again. [inaudible] He prepared it himself…

That's a form of preventative medicine that your mom used and that you used, but do you also remember certain illnesses that she tried to make sure you didn't get, or that she was fearful of you guys getting? Things that maybe were pertinent to that time?

I don't do that myself for my children, but I remember that we used to get—I think the reason I don't remember is it was a mixture, and I don't know what it was then, but then there was also some that would purge, but I don't think my sisters ever had, but I remember she had helped somebody else to purge the parasites. I have to read about them to learn.

Did you have to worry about that with your kids?

No, I didn't. It was never, I guess because it was never diagnosed, none of us [inaudible]…I never said it for my kids. I'm sure I would have found out and had it treated…So most of the things were, well one of the things was the [yerba de manso?], that she would say, just rinse the hair with this, and they wouldn't get lice, or it would just be beneficial to their scalp, for their hair. But I used it for the skin…

Do you want to talk about some of the skin remedies that you know? Do you know if there were any particular remedies for bruises, like serious bruises?

For bad bruises they would use [?]…

What about arnica?

I think, compresses, that we macerated…I think it was arnica, but there was another one, for the bruises…comfrey. [consuendo?]
You can use the whole leaf, they grow in big giant leaves like this.
It's a different color, but it looks like [plancho?]—it has the same consistency, but thicker. It's also used as a condiment. It's very prolific once it takes hold. I used to have some of it back there. You can make a poultice where you warm it up so that it's pliable. It's kind of furry. It has little hairs on it. So then you get it so that it's soft, a soft cloth—you can actually lay it right on there, or you can wrap it in like cheesecloth, and that's a poultice.

So you warm the leaf up itself?

Yeah, you can put it like a tea, except that you're not boiling it, you just warm it up and simmer it, till it's soft, and then you can just put it right on. Just like the manso.

So you take the water, you put the leaf in the water, and then you put that to boil a little?

You boil the water and you pour it on the leaf, and you simmer it for like ten minutes just to kind of get it nice and soft. It doesn't take really long. Especially if it's fresh. And you can actually take the whole leaf, or you can wrap it in something, or you can do a compress where you put a cloth in the juice and then you put that on it. It depends on where it is, I mean, if it's like an arm, you put the whole leaf. Or even if it's the back or something. But something small, you probably could just use a towel, you put the towel in the water and you use that. Comfrey.

The way that I saw it used, they macerate it, you get the leaf and crush it, but I think it would be a warm towel, a towel that had been in hot water…

I've done it with my brother, he broke his elbow, and I got the actual root, and I crushed it in the blender, comfrey, because that's actually more powerful than the leaf. The leaf is like quick, oh you gotta go get them, do it fast, but if it's something that's more serious, you get the root and it comes dried, you can get it dried, and you crush it into a paste, and you just add a little bit of warm water to make it in a paste, and then you put that on the skin and then wrap it.

How long do you leave it on?

Until it gets hard. It'll get like a crust. And you can actually leave it on and then just re-do it again, just keep making some more paste, keep crushing it and you just keep doing it until you're better.

You keep on applying it throughout the day?

Yeah, three or four times a day. As soon as it gets hard then you re-do it again. When I was in Mexico they used to call it—like to sew together, sew the bones together? Cose huesos, okay. That's what they used to call that plant.

Where do you find the root? Mexico?

You can find it—that's where I found it. They have everything there.

The mother of a friend of mine suffers bruises…

[Introduces her sister]

So how did Elena develop such an interest in herbs and medicine generally?

I've always kind of had a leaning towards being healthy and finding ways of taking care of myself. Actually when my dad got sick I really felt like I could have done something

for him, so that kind of pushed me more to—I didn't want that, I didn't want my family to be sick. And so, I left teaching to go into chiropractic, to learn more about it.

Why chiropractic as opposed to medicine?

Well, I wanted to go to D.O. school, doctor of osteopathy. But it was so hard to get in, and it was so expensive, and I wanted to start something right away, and I would have to take the MCAT and study for it, and it would be eight months before I would even be able to turn in an application. And the chiropractic school just was so fast and I could start immediately, and although it turned out to be just as expensive, they don't tell you that when you first start! And the other thing about it was that it was holistic—they really push natural medicine and [manual?] medicine, which is all the things that I wanted to do. And I had been working—I lived in a martial arts school, for like six years, and through that I met a lot of healers who did a lot of manual medicine, and herbal therapies anyway, so it was just like I needed to, I wanted to do more in that area. So it just seemed like the perfect… It was just the most natural progression for that.

In my day people who studied chiropractic did not also immerse themselves in the study of herbs. You do. Why? Is that something that was done at school?

A little, not really. Not really. It's just something that I wanted to do. One of the doctors that I worked—who got me interested, he kind of encompassed all the aspects of healing. He was the one really who got me excited, because I said, If I could do all that too, then I really could help people! And he worked with not just the physical body, but nutritional, what he called chemical, emotional, and spiritual. And that just was perfect for my belief system and the way I wanted to live anyway.

Do you feel that being spiritual helps in spiritual ways?

For myself I do, and for a couple—so many times I'll have people who come to me, and there's really no physical ailment, but they're just stressed, or pressed, and to me that's like spiritual, that's a spiritual oppression. So many times I've had patients where I did not do anything to them, but we sat and we talked, and I talked about—one particular time because I was working with women with altars, I told him to go home and make an altar. I said, Whatever it is that you think is the illness in front of you, make that a symbol and put it on your altar. And just pray. That's basically what I told him—I told him to pray! Put it in front of you, cause when you can see it in front of you, then it's almost like you can see that it's not a part of you, and it's almost, letting it go and giving it back to God, because no matter what I did physically, their body would not change until they were able to remove it and just kind of let it go. So I've done that before, but mostly just sitting and talking with them. And talking about, you know, lifestyle changes, a lot of lifestyle changes. I do that a lot.

Have you felt that when you have counseled people in that way, have you received positive feedback from them, like the person who you recommended to do an altar?

Yeah, I did. This woman I saw four times, and she just felt like—well the reason I did it too was because I was doing the work with my mother and just realizing how important it

was for healing. This was like for people who had passed away. And I thought, well why not with an illness? And she just thought it was an easy way to focus on something. And I didn't see her after the fourth time, but it felt like for her that was her step forward to get moving. And I don't know really what her altar looked like or anything, I don't know if it was simple or if it was elaborate, or even if she did it, but she said she did.

And she said it worked for her, that it was working for her?

Yeah. She said she felt better, she felt like she knew why she had come to me. That's what she said. I knew I came here for a reason. So sometimes that happens. I don't do that with everybody, but every now and then you just kind of have a feeling like, you know, I'm going to try this. You don't have anything else to do. So I like that.

And why is your mother so involved with altars?

Well, I grew up with that tradition. Almost everything I do, I always attribute it to my mother! She was such a big influence in my life, and I guess it wasn't until I was a mature woman that I really see that everything I do, everything that, all the directions that I've taken, I was influenced by her. She had very strong beliefs, religious but she loved life, she had a hard life and she was a very strong person, very intelligent person, a survivor. And her story, it's an epic. But she brought all her traditions, she came from a very small village, and the woman who raised her was her influence. She was her great aunt, and she was an elderly woman by the time that I was born, and I have a photograph of her holding me but I don't remember her because she went back to Mexico probably by the time I was a year old. And she died in her village, she never came back. But she was from Yucatan, she was a Mayan woman, and all these traditions that my mother practiced were from her own upbringing. And one very strong one was to have these home altars, for religious and cultural traditions, the most important one to her and the biggest one was Christmas [?], and she would always tell the story about when she, how she did this, and what they did in her village, and then how she decorated…so she was an artisan, and was just, she had this creativity, and she never went to an art school and to me she had all this…idea of composition, and I learned that from her. And then the second very important one was in Eastertime, when I was a kid we'd go to—[?] she could no longer go out. We'd go to the churches because it was said that you had to visit seven churches on holy [?], and they were always decorated, and then on Saturday, they would say glorious Saturday, but it was like the altar was transformed into a beautiful composition of white. White candles, white flowers, white vestments, everything. I would just love it, and I still have those images. Well, she would do that at home. We lived in this really small adobe house, and I spent Saturday morning, holy Saturday, I would wake up to this white altar, she had a picture of the sacred heart of Jesus, and that's what she would put up there. But on holy Friday she would have the doloros, that was the virgin with tears, and all in black, draped in black, with just a couple of candles. But Saturday, it would be tears, high, about three or four tears. And she always had a garden, she would decorate it with white flowers, just like the churches. She had [?] lilies, laviolas, and daisies, were the most that I remember. They were from her garden. She would make these wreaths from boxwood, this hedge that was there, and in fact she would make wreaths and crosses for funerals and whoever wanted one. But she never bought anything—everything she made herself. So it was all decorated. And it was beautiful. I

looked forward to it, but I knew it was going to be there, so she must have worked at night, after we went to church on Friday! And then, so that was the third one. And then for the other one, she had a little niche, actually she didn't make a big elaborate thing, I'm not sure why, because in her village they have the tradition of—I know why. Because the tradition was to go to the cemetery. Now we would go to the cemetery, but in those days the cemeteries here in the United States, you didn't do that. You didn't decorate, but today you can. So we'd go to the [?] cemetery, one of the biggest cemeteries in L.A., Catholic cemeteries, and we'd go to any relative or anyone that we knew, that my mother knew, and we would sit down and we would clean it and bring flowers, and bring a lunch, my aunts and I, we'd be playing around among the gravestones looking at everything and then they'd call us, Come on over. And then as we ate, a picnic right there over the grave, and then they would start the stories of the people who had died in her village, their relatives, their grandparents. Or the person they knew there that was related to this person. All these stories. This happened over and over again. And so it was, my mother's stories always were related to the altars. She was making [la signiento de alta?] it was a story about her grandmother—she didn't remember her mother, her father—Mama Paula, who was the matriarch, the person that I feel is most responsible to who I am today. It was my mother's great aunt, it was my great great aunt. But my mother called her Abuela, Mama Paula, because she raised her, she raised my mother, my grandmother, my great grandmother. That's a long story, it's a wonderful story. So she was to my mother, it was like her grandmother. And so she never said, That was my great aunt. That was my Abuelita, she would say…. And so the practice of altars, the one that I was most involved with was the la signiento. My mother had a stroke in 1975 and over the years she lost less mobility and until she was in a wheelchair all the time. But she never lost her spunk and her activities, but she had us do it for her. She would have her la signiento in the living room in this house. And I had been helping her for several years, and mostly my son Javier but sometimes the children would add to it. And I would have my own ideas too, you know, and I'd say, Well, I think I want to do this, and she'd say, No, I want—she had several hills and stud them with [pales?] and plants and stuff, and then she put everything she had—she had so many items over the years, over 50 years—she'd put everything, and I'd say, Well, that doesn't go with that! And as a teenager, especially, I don't think that's good there! And she'd say, When I die you do it your way! And so if I had a difference of opinion, she'd go and she'd put it up, and I'd say It looks good like that Mom! And so when I'd go to work and come back, it was changed, she had somebody do it for her! It was *her* la signento, and it took me a few years to say Right, this is hers—someday it will be mine. So la signentos were the biggest thing that I got involved in.

And now she does it just like my grandmother, she puts way too much in, and when I suggest to do it differently, it's her way anyway!

You know Self Help [?] Graphics is just two blocks down the street, and it's been there since…1979, 78, but I didn't really go in there and find out how I could be part of this until 1980, because I had seen when you get instructors for their Day of the Dead—they started Day of the Dead celebrations, and a couple of artists, Karen [?], and her mission was a community worker and she was an artist so she wanted to bring up something that the community could be involved in, so she thought of that, although many people were not practicing that here in those days. Only privately, they would, but not like it is today. But that was like the beginning of here in Los Angeles—I understand San Francisco,

about the same time, they started doing that too. About 1974. So in 1980 is when I went in there and when she learned that I had kind of a background—that I had known and my mother had practiced this, she hired me and then that was the beginning of our, my relationship with Self Help Graphics. In those days they had these huge community events, and I was an instructor. We made headdresses because they had a big procession from Evergreen Cemetery to Self Help Graphics on the streets, and lots of participants, lots of people from the outside would come in. And then they discontinued the big processions and the workshops, then they just had an exhibit, and so I booked the first years that I was there, it was a big community altar, so I kind of helped to direct, but it was everyone's work, and it was huge. Everyone had a part in it. And then in 1988 somebody just gave somebody referred me to a place where they wanted someone to do an altar, and so I went and I did that, and it just started, then at Self Help Graphics I started doing my own altar, and it was always that personal for someone in my family, for many years, and it's been doing it ever since. Sometimes it's for different events or different people. But now I get called to do altars everywhere. I went to Scotland, did I tell you? Self Help Graphics sent me. And the reason was they had two artists from Glasgow who had come to do—they had like an exchange of cultures. It was a whole UK project with L.A., and these two artists came to Self Help Graphics, and they were here during the Day of the Dead, and they loved it. So they wanted to have one in Glasgow, and they had a print studio, comparable to Self Help Graphics, printing studio, even more organized. So they sent me, and a woman, my friend Margaret who does [pop and picaro?] and one of the artists, they sent us over there. And the only thing I took were the Mexico consuelas items my husband's—a small picture of my husband, and one of my mother, and [? Guadeloupe]. And I made the flowers here, but I didn't open them, so I could pack them, and I finished them up over there. They gave me whatever I needed. I went to buy a tartan, to cover it, and Margaret did all the [pup and picaro], and it was beautiful. They loved it. And they brought in some students from a very prestigious art school, Glasgow art school I think it's called, and these students, all adults, they sent 24 and I said Oh my God what can I have 24 people do with my—that's just too many! But of course they were art students, so we had a lot of cardboard and colored squares, and I said, well, if you find something that you could do for the altar—you could make candlesticks, you could make candle holders, and I thought—frames, boxes, and decorate them. Most of them came up with this really good design of candle holder, so we had lots of candles, and we had lots of candles donated, and we made things, because a lot of people brought their photographs. And so they put little frames to put them in. They even made [pup and picaro]—not the fancy one that Margaret did, but just…it was beautiful, and they just, the people loved it. It was one of the biggest events, they said later, and they had a procession, they had an old cemetery from the 1200's, two blocks away, and they had a procession. They made these huge lanterns, like [gona vera?] lanterns, but they were made out of reed and covered with tissue and they had a light inside, and they carried them, and the only thing—they had a band, a student band, and they played tequila—da da da—that's the only Mexican song they knew! It was so much fun. But it was beautiful. And we just presented…

And we didn't have marigolds, so what did they get you instead?

Well, they bought me a bouquet of plastic ones, and the rest were roses. I can't remember what flower they had—actually I went into the business district, they were right in it, and

there's a lot of—just like in London, lots of flower vendors and fruit vendors, they have stands… I think I bought, a yellow flower, I think azalia, and they were expensive, but we made some tissue paper ones. I loved that on the day of the opening the woman said, I couldn't find the marigolds, but she bought these plastic ones! And here's a photograph of me holding my plastic flowers! So I do that, and I do [?] too.

And so Mama Lupa had the little one in her house instead for Day of the Dead?

Yes, she did. It was designated for that day, and it was the same stories, so to me the connection with it, that I loved about it, was to learn about the ancestors, and I think the bottom line of why I do it today, and I always tell people, is that she said, and I heard the priest say this in a different way, but my mother said that we suffer three deaths, and the first death is the day that we stop breathing. The day that we die, we give our last breath. The second death is the day that we're buried, never to be seen on the face of the earth again. And the third, most dreadful death of all is the day we're forgotten. She said that. It was so important for us to know, to remember, her mother, her grandma, especially Mama Paula, so I've taken it on, further I guess, because I do these public altars, and now Elena last year we applied for a grant and she's my apprentice and we're doing things together! Although my son Javier, he has been collaborating for many years, especially with foundations, because depending on the places, sometimes it's a big site or a big space, and every year I feel it's different—it depends who it's for and where the place is, so it's never the same, just like my mother's altars, they were never exactly the same. So he has been doing a lot of—especially, for many years, the construction, not only of the la signentos but of my altars, and then my older son, when I've done some in Orange County or in that area, where he lives, he has helped me too, and has put in his ideas. I love that because it has grown into a creative process but also a family project. And then, I have my grandchildren help me—every year we make flowers, we make something for the altar, and in fact we have to start now because we have a lot of projects…we're very very excited, and in fact today I saw the film on the woman [?] who were murdered, about 300 or more, and we were asked to do an altar for them, and so that's good. I was doing some research, trying to find names.

The [Maki Adora?] women?

Yeah. They were the majority, but there were lots of women.

So last year, we did a very different one, because I always do—I do a traditional altar, and I still do it because I want that tradition to continue the way I learned it. And the purpose is to honor, to remember, the life of someone. You actually celebrate their life.

I'm going to interrupt you now, to film…

Side B

…To get the blood circulating…and then garlic. And then I made an oil, I made an ointment with the same stuff. It worked!

This was for Whitey? What was the matter with her?

She has heat spots, and—

She scratches so much, her skin—

Yeah, right under her arm she scratched some open sores from just looking and scratching so much. Hot spot. She hasn't been scratching.

And I can tell because if she scratches a lot of her hair…this morning, swept a little bit, but yesterday just gobs of it…

When did she start having spots?

It's been a few days, maybe a week.
Maybe more than that. When it got really hot during this time of year. Maybe a month.
You first gave her a bath…with the tea.
I made a big pot, it's still in that bucket, and then I separated the solid stuff from the tea, so I strained it. Then I got the stuff that I strained and I mashed it, and then I added some oil to it, and I just put it in a little container to make an ointment. She actually should get it every day until it runs out. The mansa, and some jalapeno, and garlic. The mansa is just to help it heal, and the jalapeno is to get the circulation going, and the garlic is to kill—it's an antibacterial and anti-fungal or viral, whatever, to kill the bug.

And you apply that to her every day?

Yeah. After they bathe her…

So you wash her with the tea water, and then you use the other stuff, you mash it all up?

It's oil. It's oil-based. I could show it to you. And then I just, with a paint brush, or a brush, I paint it on her, because it's hard to get in to the hair, to the skin, so you have to kind of move it and you brush it on her. And if she licks it off, it's okay, because it will be good for her. The oil will be good for her anyway.

And how much chile pepper do you put in that?

I used one jalapeno. It was a little one. I used two cloves of garlic, they were big. And then I don't know how much mansa you put in there, a couple of leaves.

I put a lot. I would say about eight leaves. Ones that are drying, I just pull them off.

And you boiled it with the water or did you let the water boil and then put the stuff in?

I let the water boil and then I put it in. Actually I put the garlic in first because it's the hardest to separate, and then I put the mansa in and just let it simmer for like ten minutes maybe. Maybe a little more. But I didn't let it boil. And then I just took it off and let it sit for about an hour, and then I mashed it, separated it and mashed it. It gave her instant relief.

She's not itching or scratching.

We've been watching her today.

Would you recommend that for people too, if they have itching?

Sure. I think so. You could use cayenne pepper and it will immediately take away the itching, but it's also an irritant, so that's why I put the oil in it.

Cayenne pepper applied?

Mixed with oil. You could put it straight, like crushed cayenne pepper, the powder, you can put it straight on something and it'll immediately stop the itching, but it's also so caustic, you know, that it'll make the skin red though. Cause it's a circulator of the blood, so it'll kind of clear out all that [?] and stuff that cause the reaction to make the itch, the histamine, it'll actually circulate it out, move the blood.

So does it feel a little burning, stinging?

Yeah, probably it'll sting a little, like if you put lemon on a cut… She tried to lick it but she didn't really lick a lot of it.

On people, what would itching be due to?

It depends. It could be an external irritant, like the soap on your clothes, or like a plant, poison ivy or something.

The ones that have the milky stuff…

That makes you itch, yeah. It's like an allergic reaction. Or sometimes when you have, when there are illnesses that makes people break out in rashes.

High blood pressure does.

Liver congestion, or even a diseased liver will give people rashes.

My mother, in her last three years, she was so itchy that she would break the skin, so then, she had [?] make her the [?] de mansa, and she put some salve or lotion, because of her high blood pressure. She had heart failure because of the high blood pressure, and the itchiness…She would say thank you, thank you Lord, thank you plant! … You can take pineapple, the top…several plants like that, the carrot and the pineapple [inaudible]

Are there any other skin diseases that you are familiar with, that you know treatments for?

We just talked about ringworm and exzema… we haven't really talked about acne…

Is that due to dietary deficiencies?

Depends. There's always the question about that—sometimes it's the person's chemical composition.

And I think that's the main thing, because it's mostly hormones, it's mostly chemical.

So you think it's a hormonal imbalance, to have acne?

Yeah. When women go through their cycle it gets worse, so that's a clear sign that it's an imbalance!

Are there any treatments that you know of for acne?

I know that chamomile and marigold is a good astringent for the skin. Marigold is great for rashes. I don't know necessarily if it's for acne though. It's just topical…

We would treat the skin, but if it's another cause, an internal cause, then…

We didn't know it was an internal cause until recently. Like for me, I didn't know until recently. But, so you wouldn't treat it internally, although now, I would treat it internally. Definitely I would probably try to balance out the hormones, depending on what the person—you would have to do a complete, a history of what is their diet, what is—and it's also stress too. Will bring up stuff on your skin. People who have herpes, when they're stressed out, they will break out. So stress will do that for acne too.

So avoidance of stress.

Yeah, lifestyle changes…That's like the number one…I think stress is the underline of so many diseases right now, because it's masked by—you know it's an external thing, but it's an internal grind to the body. But you can't say, Oh, she's suffering from—it's not a medical condition. But it is the cause of medical conditions.

Stress leads to medical conditions.

Definitely. Absolutely.

So what are some of the best ways to deal with stress?

Any kind of release that allows you to let that stress dissipate. It could be exercise, it could be prayer, it could be meditation…

There has been something for stress, but it was not called stress, it was called susto!

Right! Exactly!

I think I gave an example of someone, my cousin's mother when her father died, that's when I really became aware of the term susto. Because she was under—the grief caused her to get sick…[incomprehensible] It was topical things, and just to give her this tea for a little while…especially her limbs, her stomach…her body, massage. Which makes sense.

Those things all work, because they're all related, just like in reflexology. Nerve endings, in the appendages, have centers that send messages to the central nervous system. So that's why reflexology works, because you're stimulating those centers, and those centers send messages to the body. You can help with disease, you can help with just an overall well being, just by doing simple things, on the ear, and the hands, and the feet. I mean, those are just ancient. Those are like intuitive forms of knowing how to heal people. And like she says, herbal teas are very relaxing. Cinnamon, sage, lemon balm. Lemon grass, lavender, you know—all those are soothing. There's a chemical reaction that just makes your brain feel better. And a lot of our stress comes from how we look at things in our lives. You know?

What about depression? I've been reading about depression and anxiety among Mexican Americans and Latinos, and it talks about Mexican Americans or Latinos not really going to the doctor for things like depression or anxiety. What have been your experiences with anxiety or depression?

That's what I think, people are coming—they show their signs of depression in lots of ways. You ask me about how I treat people—they come in with a physical ailment, but really, it's either stress, anxiety, or depression. When I've sat and talked and did nothing else but talked to somebody, to me it was my clinical diagnosis was depression or anxiety or stress. I don't know if they don't go to the doctor, because I feel like more and more people are coming for those reasons more than, Oh, you know, I bumped my shoulder when I was carrying the laundry, or My back has been aching for ten years. Really? And why do you think that is? And when you get down to it, it's not because they hurt it, it's because of stress… women carry their stress in their upper bodies, men carry it in their lower bodies. And you think it's just a muscle skeletal thing, but no, I think it's related to emotional—the body can't deal with it emotionally so it stores it in the body somehow.

People who come to see you, why do you think they suffer stress? Where does it come from with those people? What do you see?

I just think it's the basic lifestyle. A lot of the people who I've seen, when I first started working, first of all I worked in an office that only saw accident victims. So that was the first reason why they came. But when we were done with that, Well you know doctor, I've been suffering from this for so many years, and they talk about those things, and a lot of these people come from small towns, they come from small areas, and they come to the big cities, they come to this lifestyle, and it's confusion! First, it's not like what they're used to, and second, there's so much pressure to make it and to make something of their lives, and it's at such a high, fast pace, that it will cause havoc on your body. It's

like when you go to Las Vegas, even for us to go to Las Vegas, just the stress from the lights and the noise and the smoke, you feel like you're being bombarded. Your body feels it. That's what happens to these people, and over time, you know, it turns into arthritis, or it turns into a physical ailment, or it turns into a habitual problem, like alcoholism, or smoking, or it's like, it turns into something, if not violence. And I think it's just this inability to adapt to a different way of life. And for those people who are here, I think it's just having to make it. The stress of just having to live in this fast paced society.

The people you saw, were they immigrants?

Mostly immigrants. Mostly immigrants that I saw, yeah. Central America, Mexico, a few Asians. I would say 2 percent were Asian, but 90 percent were either from south of the border somewhere, from Mexico all the way down to Chile. Mostly from—because we're so close to Mexico.

Do you ever get people from the Caribbean areas?

No, not really. I got a few Cubans but they lived here, so you couldn't say their lifestyles had been impacted, or were different. Actually I did have one Cuban who came from Cuba, and he brought his child, and he was in a car accident but then he brought his child in and said We don't know what's wrong with him. He doesn't grow, he doesn't eat, and he was just kind of weak. And I told him, You know, you need to give him something that's good for his body. What do you feed him? Oh, well he likes to eat chips and soda. So take those out of his diet! I mean, number one, they're easy and fast, I said don't do it! I said Give him good food that you make, try not to give him food that's in a can or in a bottle, or you know, whatever—make the food and add a little bit of cod liver oil. Just give him a spoonful with his meals, he doesn't like it, mix it with orange juice. And he said, Really? I said, Yeah. Tell me how he feels in six weeks. And he said, You know, when I was a kid, they would make us get in line, and they would give us a big [?], and everybody had to do it! And he was a really tall guy. And he just said, I forgot about that! Now that you say it, you're right, I'm going to start giving it to my kid! And I guess we saw him for about a month, and I said How's your boy? Oh, look at him! And the more they brought him in, and said He's growing, and he looks happy, his hair is nice—they were just like, it was so small and simple! But you come to this city life and you forget, you really forget. I mean, it took a long time for me to come back to this. I always was a healthy person, and I ate pretty healthy—when I was in high school I was a vegetarian! I didn't even eat meat! That was a problem. But you forget, you know, you go off and live your life, you go to college, or you start working, and you go to Costco and you buy all those great meals from the frozen section cause it's easy, and you know, you don't realize what that does to your body.

I was reminded when you were telling that story that there were many people who had ailments that they didn't know what was wrong. They don't think go to the doctor. Many times their remedy was a [?] My mother had…[inaudible] and kind of had a cold…to relax your body, the [?] and drink a relaxing tea, and it seemed to help, because—it didn't hurt, it just didn't feel well, and—these kinds of, that feeling of not feeling healthy, you know. And over a period of time, people would feel better, and we'd say Santo Romerio.

And you know, I think probably with the stress, with the things that you need to take time and focus and you know, sound advice about taking care of yourself… Just like people go out and go to a spa. That's stress reducing, so I imagine that this kind of treatment that was practiced since I was a kid, that's what it did, because it seemed to help people. I think along with whatever [?] and those kinds of things, are beneficial and healthy, and they're part of the home remedy.

That reminds me when I first started chiropractic school, I lived in Whittier, and I met this man—he was an old guy—and his remedy, he had this woman who just would not get up, she wouldn't get out of the house, so he said, You know what I did with her? I ahd them take her outside, he got a water hose and just doused her with cold water! And he said, first of all, the blood is not moving in this woman. Then he went inside and they put her in a warm bath. Then they brought her outside again and doused her again with cold water. And did that woman wake up? Sure as hell she woke up! Not only did she wake up, but she got up and kind of danced around! She got to a point of depression where she just could not function, but it was almost like you had to jump start her, and that's what the cold water was. And even now, we use hot and cold treatments—I use them all the time, hot and cold treatments—it turns the body on. It just turns it on, like a switch. There are lots of herbs that turn the brain on, like rosemary. Rosemary is supposed to turn your—you put a little bit of oil around your temples, and you can't help but be more alert. You're awake, it's uplifting. I've heard of people putting rosemary oil in their hair, to keep them, their spirits high. Yeah. So there are things like that. It works. It's very stimulating—I don't know if it stimulates the circulation, but it's—maybe just the aroma. You go buy lavender and rosemary, and you immediately feel good, just smelling it! So why not put it on your body, or soak in it?

Rosemary is one of the staple plants that I see. Even when you go to a source, a resource, there's like two pages for rosemary, I mean it's an ancient, it's been known for centuries. It does help, it has its benefits, so it's good for a lot of things. To relax, but it's good for other things.

When we were babies my mom used to give us baths with romero two or three times a week.

Wow, that's great, and look at how vista…

So you think that then, for example, this woman that this man told you about, when they sought his help, did they characterize her ailment or feelings as depression?

I don't know. I don't think so. I'm just kind of extrapolating, I guess. I don't remember if they called it depression. She was sick, that's what they said, she was sick.

Because it seems from what we've been talking about, maybe stress was treated under a different name or a different understanding of it.

You know, that's interesting, cause I was reading some information about stress, and depending on which specialist you go to, it's called a lot of things. Like if you go to a neurologist, it's called fibromyalgia. If you go to a cardiologist, it's called angina. You

know? So it depends, and you're right, we don't call it stress, we don't call it stress, we don't call it depression, we call it depending on who we see. But it's a rose by another name, you know, it's the same thing, just somebody else's profession decides what—well I don't know what else to call it so it's going to be this! And every profession has that one general term that covers something they have no idea what it is.

Do you think that stress, depression and anxiety are the types of illness that are difficult to characterize by us people, just daily living people? Like when it occurs to people, do you think it's difficult for them to say Oh, I must be depressed or I must have anxiety?

Oh, to our own selves? I don't know. I know that for lots of—well, just from growing up, that we wouldn't even go to a therapist if you had trouble dealing with something. Just—that wasn't one of the options. So maybe. Maybe we don't know to say that Oh I must be depressed, or—because that must be really bad. You know? I guess… it depends. Because I've had a lot of people say, I am so depressed! And I'm a bundle of nerves, or I'm going to have a nervous breakdown! Those types of things.

We had circumlocutions back on the farm in Kansas, older people when I was growing up, they talked about being down in the dumps, always under the weather, under a cloud, flying off the handle, so irritable, all those kinds of expressions that characterize the behavior, but didn't give a name to what it might be in many medical terms.

Right, there wasn't a name for it. I don't know if there's a taboo to say I'm depressed, or—because that's like…

I think so too—it's the same thing, like I said, it isn't something that we called it or gave it a name, just feeling…headaches, or [?]…In my age…I didn't know anyone who went to a therapist, or went and got psychologists, therapists, and you know, my peers, people that I grew up with, not until I was teaching… How do you decide that? I remember one member of my family was going to a therapist, and I thought at the time, you don't need a therapist to go tell your problems to, I mean, you could find someone in your family, or…it wasn't done. It was kind of like a highfalutin' kind of…or something that just didn't seem that you could do. Whatever it takes to feel better, to feel well. If it can help you, good!

I think that's why some patients come to me and really don't need physical care, they just need somebody to listen to them. Just to know that—that's okay, it's okay to go to a doctor for that. About the most intimate things, sexual dysfunction to, uh, I feel like my son hates me! Stuff like that. And you don't think that you would be the one that they would be going to, but…

Since many of them are immigrants, do they ever talk about traditional remedies?

A few do. A few do. But you know, it feels like a lot of them are out of touch with that. They're out, they've kind of gotten caught up in this lifestyle, this consumer-type lifestyle where that is so far away from them. Very few, mostly the older women, they will say Oh yes I've been drinking my [telemata?]—they'll say something like that. Mansania, or they'll mention those things—but not very many. You'd be surprised. I

mean, I feel, I do understand, or I didn't recognize, the amount of authority I had to give those suggestions. In some cases I felt like, You should know this! But you know, not having that tone—but just feeling like, This was an easy one, how come you didn't know this one? I think they're just so out of touch with their own culture. That's the sad part. I was going to say, even in Mexico in the big cities, so many people don't know what to do, that when I was visiting this one Feliciano Mas, when people came in dumbfounded with their own bodies, and they could go down the street and pick something off of a tree that would help them! It was like they were helpless! So, that's scary.

I know in El Salvador it had somewhat to do with the fact that to be indigenous was a bad thing and there was so much genocide that there's really not very many indigenous populations there anymore, and so people became very much removed from that—they don't have their language, they don't have a lot of their traditions. You look at them in their face and you look at some of their ways and they're still very much…my grandma for example, they just become really removed from it, by means of survival is what I've understood from it.

When I was in Merida, I think the part that was disheartening was the emphasis to look and dress and eat like North Americans. That whole idea, and just the emphasis on sexuality, expressing your sexuality, the young girls, and even the men, I'm a man or I'm a woman and I'm voluptuous—I mean, it was that whole, it was so—you didn't see it in the indigenous people, but you saw it in those who were—maybe like you say, who were trying to get out of that, or forget where they're from, or I don't know. But that was the saddest part for me. I think you're right, part of it is survival and part of it just—globalism. I hate to say it, but I think that has a lot to do with it. I really do.

It crosses other areas, cultural areas—celebrations, so many things.
It's interesting that sometimes somebody, some people, after becoming or getting some education, they start [therapy?], they're lucky that they start learning where they are, their values, and the things that they should retain and that they should adopt…maybe it takes a few years, or maybe it takes a different—different things that happen in their life. If they just adopt this lifestyle…and make a good living, and that's going to take forever, and they don't have time for this, they just want socialization, they want to get it, make a living, and it gets lost, but I think later on when they have their children or grandchildren, they start saying Oh we used to do this… But I think it's the lifestyle here, that causes a lot of people to forget it, and to take the quickest way because that's this culture. It's fast and bigger-the-better, and you just get caught up in that. Everyone does.

Hemorrhoids is the next one on the list…in Chile they had treatments for that.

I think so—I think there were bagnos, I think the malva and the manso, make a hot tea…put it in the bathtub, you have to make a lot of it. And sit in it. Treatments like that

Epsom salt baths.
Malba, and also yerba de manso, those were the two that I remember.

Did they make any sort of salve ointment?

I think so. Mostly with oil. Probably olive oil, that was used a lot. With something else, but I can't remember what it was.

What would you say are the hemorrhoids?

From what I understand it's constipation…lack of oils and moisture in your body.

So basically sit in the tea?

That's for the hemorrhoids, but then things that would treat the…cleanse your body, the colon, empty it out. My mother was using the [?]

Would you perform the navativa before alleviating?

I would think so. But I don't know which is the best, but I think that was the first thing, the topical thing.

How would you prepare the enema?

It was prepared just like the bath, with boiling water and [inaudible]…
Then we put it in those bladders, and…
You know the rest!
That was the cure for a lot of things. Like we said before, we used it to clean out the system. You got a fever, you need an enema!
Because it would actually lower the fever and clear out your intestines, where actually the problem would begin anyway.

So what about constipation? What gives way to constipation?

Mainly diet, and not enough moisture in your diet. Or oils. But it's mainly diet.

What type of a diet would be characterized as a bad diet that would give way to constipation?

The bad oils… Fast food, all those fast foods, high processed foods.

Did they suffer that much constipation before fast food and processed food?

I think there was…I remember that I had to take a lot of iron, because of my skin, that was one of the…and it caused great constipation.
I remember drinking teas, cinnamon, and rice water, but it was warm, it was like a drink…
And my mother would say a teaspoon, a drop of mineral oil—
Yup, that's right, and we would have some kind of oil.
Olive oil, but mineral oil was the best. It was only a drop. Then we had the tea, hot tea.

Are there other foods or minerals, vitamins, or herbs that cause constipation if ingested too much?

Constipation is kind of cumulative too though. It's not just like Okay I ate this hot dog and now I'm constipated. You might have eaten a lot of meats, cause remember, we didn't have a lot of meat every day when we were growing up, and I don't think you did either. But high protein, like meats, can cause constipation, cause it takes a long time to digest that stuff! So…and it's cumulative, it takes three days for meat to digest, and if you eat meat every day, what's happening in your bowels? That stuff sits there! Isn't that a pretty sight! And you know, when people do a cleanse, where they eliminate the stuff in their bowels, like over a period of time, they discharge so much fecal matter that it's like pounds of it that's been just sitting there for years! I've not seen it personally but I've heard stories of people who told me, Oh my gosh, after I finished this cleanse, it was like I had a snake come out of me. It was dark and tarry-like. Because that's just stuff that stays in your body that never gets eliminated! And I would say a lot of it has to do with the way we eat. You know, I don't think—I mean, I know iron does cause constipation, but…I'd be hard pressed to believe that things like that will cause constipation as much as protein. You know? So… You don't hear a lot of vegetarians complaining of constipation.

I was just going to say, it's not so much what you eat, it's what you don't eat. If you don't have enough vegetables and liquids, if you have a lot of sugar, I think that causes some constipation. Because when the kids were little and they did get constipated, my mother says, Well, maybe they had too much sugar, or…

There are foods that actually make you dehydrated. Lots of sugar drinks make you dehydrated. And you need moisture in order for the motility in your intestines to work. You have to have it—that's what, you know, flushes you out. If you don't, you'll get constipated. So that's another thing, dehydration.

So basically, watch the diet. What about, let's maybe go on to congestion, nasal congestion…

We talked about [oregano?], that's one of the main things that we use, that I use, for congestion.

The nose cleanser where you take like salt water and you squish, you can either pour it into it or using one of those syringes, push it in and hold it, not to suck it out but to push it in, and then it drains.

I know that for congestion, a [?] tea very strong, or cinnamon, that's very stimulating, that was for that.

That was drunk, not placed on the chest?

No, drunk. It's a drink. And the lemon leaf…

Those citrus, yeah, and [bolgavalia] leaves. Or the flowers, you can make a tea with the flowers and that will help with congestion.

I'd heard about using the flowers…

It's the flowers. I was just thinking about it, because a while ago a friend had congestion, I was going to go up but there were no flowers so I didn't do it.

Just boil them and make a tea and drink the tea, huh?

Well, they're flowers, so you wouldn't boil them. You would infuse them.

That helps loosen up what's in the chest?

It's expectorant. It's an expectorant.

And oregano is as well?

Yeah, I think so. All those aromatic herbs are kind of expectorants and astringents, so they'll actually dry it out too. Licorice. Licorice too.

Many of the cough medicines have licorice.

The plant, the licorice plant—the woody part and the leaves too, and the root. Especially. The whole plant, but especially the root, and that one you have to boil, for like 20 minutes, cause it's harder. That is great for the lungs, to move the phlegm, yeah. It loosens it up so you can spit it out. I don't like it either, but my mom likes it.

I like it mild, you know, I love the tea, oh the licorice?

Licorice is for a wet cough but phlegmy cough, and then the marshmallow root is for the dry cough. There's two different kinds, and I think citruses were for the dry coughs too. The citrus stuff, like the leaves for the lemons and orange too.

Did you ever use anything like a mustard plaster, on the chest?

Yeah, we use lots of plasters!

First of all, a very warm cloth, I would iron it and put it on their chest and then rub some oil—eucalyptus, it could be drank too, a mild tea, but the camphor, you know, camphor oil, and the heat was good for that. And then a tea too, with lemon. Hot tea. When you're congested and it's bronchitis, or a chest cold, and a cough and it hurts…

I have a Chinese friend who taught me a remedy to move the phlegm. I did it a couple of times on [?] and Rick, I did it on a couple of people.

How does a plaster work?

Well, basically…you can use charcoal, [to apply] or when you grind it it becomes a paste…but what they do is there are some plants that are mineral-like that actually have a pulling effect, they draw out the toxins, so for a wet cloth you would want to use those.

But I know that for a dry cough, we didn't use those because those would be too drying, you cannot use a plaster for those. You have to use something that adds moisture, so it was an oil. So like eucalyptus was an oil, and you put gasoline over it, to retain it, because you want it to retain the moisture, it was too dry. It was a dry cough or a dry cold. But what they do basically are they draw out toxins. I've heard of people using those paste and plasters for tumors. Where they actually draw out the tumor. And to the point where they even come through the skin when you use them, over a period of time. Any type of tumor—and you know what they would make them out of? Cayenne pepper, and something called burdock root, and yaro. And they would grind it into a paste and they would put it on there, every day, two or three times a day. And some people have said that the tumor actually comes through the skin and it creates a sore that pushes through the skin because of the drying properties of these plasters. Cayenne pepper is one of the main ingredients. And slippery elm. Now you reminded me.

There's the bark of a tree, I'm trying to think of what it is…I have to look in my notes. I can't remember right now. I have my handwritten notes, and I didn't have it there…I think it was for a deep cough…you know my father had tuberculosis, and so my sister, I remember that was one of the things that my mother wanted to use on all of us because she was afraid that we might have it or we might get it. And so when we had a cough or really bad, almost like bronchitis, that was one of the remedies. It was the bark of a plant that was used as a compress, and she always believed in it, I did too. Even today I have a hot cloth or towel, I even put it in the microwave, and then just layer it with something heavy, just to have that heat besides whatever tea you take. I put it on the back, too, because that kind of relieves the coughing, it relieves the coughing at night, until you get the medication.

So can you characterize a wet cough again?

A wet cough is usually something that has phlegm in it—when you cough there's a reason to it because there's stuff floating around in your chest, in the tubes, the bronchials of your lungs. And a dry cough is when there is just nothing productive in it, it's more like a whooping type sound, it's hollow.

What would cause a dry cough?

Viruses. Viruses. They're usually not wet. Because bacteria will cause the accumulation of the phlegm, so that's more bacterial. I was thinking too, why those plasters work—because it increases the circulation, especially like the cayenne pepper, the mustard, those are stimulants, so they increase the stimulation, which is what you want, and that's also what makes the phlegm start to move and loosen up. The whole idea about the warming effect, you know. And sometimes you want to produce a fever that way, because the fever will kill the bark, and that will increase the circulation. It's like an artificial fever, you make them sweat. They sweat it out, you get it out. Definitely. That's the problem with aspirin, cause aspirin kind of takes away your fever, but the fever is important. The fever is getting, trying to kill the bug, and if we don't allow our bodies to do that, they don't heal faster. It actually takes longer.

Are there ever instances where a person comes down with just a fever? For example, when I was in Mexico, I got really sick for one day. I wasn't sick the whole time I was there for two months, but I got sick for one day and what is was is I was at home just feverish. And we didn't know what that was from—I was eating really well, healthy fruits and vegetables, very good meals, so…

Did you have stomach cramps or anything like that?

No, I just had a fever. Really strange. And because I was feverish and having chills, the lady who was the mom, she said, Oh take this, something to make the fever come out, and she covered me up with blankets and gave me that. I don't remember because I was so incoherent, what she was giving me—I was like, I'll take anything!

That probably helped you then.

I think she gave me some teas and things, and it made me have more fever, made me sweat.

That sounds right.

A cinnamon tea and lemon leaves tea, I keep saying they're stimulant…

Yaro tea too, when you want someone to get that fever up, you give them the tea and you put them in a hot tub, to increase that sort of sweat, get all those toxins out of their body.